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• OUR •
PIONEER * FATHERS:
THEIR TRIALS AND THEIR TRIUMPHS.



Address delivered before the Oxford Historical Society
on the evening of Friday, May 4, 1897. by

REV. W. A. MACKAY, B.A., D.D.,

WOODSTOCK, ONTARIO.



PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE SOCIETY.

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OUR PIONEER FATHERS:

THEIR TRIALS AND THEIR TRIUMPHS.

WHO has not heard of "The Bonnie Brier Bush?" Rather, who has not wept and laughed alternately as he has come under its touching pathos or its sparkling humor? Domsie, teaching in "the auld schule-house," or listening to the merry shouts of the bairns at their play, has kindled fond recollections of former days in the bosom of many a grey-headed-sire. George, "the lad o' pairts," has been an inspiration to many a struggling student. Margaret Howe shews us how the highest virtues of woman can be developed in the humblest sphere of life. Elspeth Macfayden has reminded many a preacher of other pulpit critics more candid than comforting. Even Lachlan Campbell, stern but true, has his use in the present day of laxity and religious indifference. Jamie Sontar, "the cynic of the Glen," has sharpened the wits of many a reader; and Weelum MacLure will help men and women to live better lives so long as the world remains.

But friends, in this county we have the Drumtochty of Canada; and the history of some portions of it presents us with as fine a lot of men and women as ever sat for their portrait before the author of "The Bonnie Brier Bush." So long as industry, perseverance, domestic virtue, and moral worth are appreciated, so long will the trials and triumphs of the pioneers of Oxford be held in admiration. Theirs was a hard lot, but bravely they faced the difficulties, and nobly they overcame them. To them difficulties existed only to be overcome.

Come with me in imagination and view a scene far away over the broad Atlantic, where the heather blooms and the mountains rear their rugged tops. A cruel and unjust policy of expatriation is being carried out by some Highland proprietors. Men who never flinched in battle for the defence of their country, and of whom Gen. Havelock exclaimed at the close of one of the most fiercely fought battles of modern times, "Well done brave Highlanders!" are driven from their country and kindred to make way for sheep and deer. You see a home where there is great sorrow. It is not the sorrow of death, but of separation which seems to the sorrowing ones as dark as death. We hear the father like an aged patriarch bless his boy, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee in the land whither thou goest," and the mother clings to her son with all a mother's affection. But the boy must go, and hew out for himself, his aged parents and others, a home in the great unknown west. He will send for them as soon as possible. Or perhaps it is the daughter, tenderly loved, that is leaving her Highland home, prepared to face all difficulties and dangers, that she may keep plighted troth with one who has preceded her. Did it not require true courage and a firm reliance upon a covenant God, on the part of our ancestors, to leave the heath-clad hills, and the homes they loved so dearly, to face an ocean voyage of twelve weeks in an old emigrant ship, to endure all the hardships of a two weeks' journey up the St. Lawrence in open boats towed by oxen, to penetrate the unbroken fastnesses of our forests; and driving back bears and wolves, construct for themselves little log cabins where to-day we see thriving villages, populous towns, rich fields, comfortable homes, commodious school-houses, and handsome churches?

THE FIRST LOG CABINS.

The writer can remember some of those primitive houses. The cabin was 12 x 18 feet, perhaps 9 or 10 feet high, and of course built of logs. The roof was constructed of basswood

logs hollowed out and laid along side each other with the hollow side up. Then other logs, similarly hollowed, were laid on these, with the hollow side down, and so as to overlap those underneath. Such a roof was waterproof, but not always proof against the driven snow. The inside of the cabin was divided into two rooms, with a loft above. In this loft the children usually slept, and we mounted to it by means of pegs driven into the wall. The openings between the logs were filled with moss obtained from the trees, and the moss was daubed with soft clay. There was a big fireplace constructed of stones, wood and clay. This fireplace not only gave heat and light, but it was also a most excellent ventilator. Such families as could afford it, had a couple of andirons in the fireplace, upon which the sticks were carefully laid; others used a couple of flat stones for this purpose. From the top of the chimney was suspended a chain with a hook at the lower end, capable of being raised or lowered so as to adjust the pot to the fire. By and by this chain gave place to a "crane," a movable bar of iron attached by hinges to one side of the chimney, and placed horizontally over the fire. Upon this could be suspended two pots, one for the porridge, and the other for the soup. The bread was baked at first in a kind of flat-bottomed pot called the bake kettle, which stood upon three legs about three inches in length. This pot had an iron lid with a broad rim, and a loop handle to lift it by. The raised dough was put into this pot, which was placed upon the hearth and covered all over with coals. Soon the loaf issued well raised and baked, sweet and wholesome as any to-day from the best ovens in Woodstock. In the course of time the pot gave way to the "reflectors," and they in turn, to the black, cheerless, modern stove. The table was bare, but always scrupulously clean. Two bedsteads, a few stools, some rude chairs and a big Sutherlandshire chest constituted the furniture. The chairs or stools—for there was not much difference—consisted

of rough slabs of wood in which holes were bored and legs fitted in. There was usually one window consisting of four panes of glass 6 x 8 inches each. Most of the dishes were of pewter, and taken from the old country. The spoons were made of horn, and the knives and forks were horn-handled. The fare was "hamely" but healthy, "partridge and milk" with oaten-cake being the staple.

These pioneer homes were undoubtedly rude, and in many respects uncomfortable, but they sheltered many a happy family, illustrating the sentiment of Scotland's poet:

"What though on hamely fare we dine;
Wear hoddin-grey and a' that.
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine;
The man's the gowd for a' that."

The fire blazing in the big chimney at night cast many a weird-like figure into the corners of the shanty, and often while gazing into the glowing coals has my fancy conjured up Scottish castles, bloody battles, martyr scenes, bears and wolves.

We usually had to burn "green wood." This was not so bad if the fire was kept well up, but alas for the poor shivering wretches when the night was cold, and the fire burned low. It seemed impossible to get it up again. A story is told which illustrates this: A pioneer once remarked in the presence of a neighbor, that he did not believe anything could ruffle his wife's temper.

"I can tell you something that will, if you'll consent to try it," replied the neighbor.

"Agreed," said the pioneer.

"Just bring home and cut up a load of the crookedest green sticks you can find," proposed this disturber of the peace, "and if that don't worry her I don't know what will."

The plan was complied with. But there was no change in things at the pioneer's home; in fact, everything seemed to be more agreeable than before. At last our friend said:

"Wife, how do you like the wood I brought you last?"

"First rate," said the wife. "These crooked sticks fit right round my kettle, and make it boil in half the time."

The good wife had learned an important lesson, that things which "can't be cured must be endured." A difficulty which would have evoked bad temper in another, in her only developed one of the noblest Christian graces.

THE MEN OF ZORRA.

In these humble Zorra homes were born and reared not a few "boys" who have since made their mark in the world. Not one or two but several score, who to-day hold honorable rank as clergymen, lawyers, statesmen, doctors, throughout the length and breadth of this great continent, first saw the light in one of the little log cabins of Zorra. Perhaps not one of these would refer to the humble circumstances surrounding his entrance into life as a positive disadvantage. To the brave apparent hindrances are real helps. *Ad astra per aspera*. Moral muscle requires exercise no less than physical muscle. No man was ever rocked into a strong character in a hammock. Life is a battle. We must conquer difficulties or difficulties will conquer us. It is with us as with the Highlanders in battle, when their chief called out to them, "Lads, there they are! If you dinna kill them they will kill you."

"There's always room at the top," some one says. "Yes," I reply, "but no man ever reached the top sitting in a cushioned Pullman car." Think of the early struggles of Lincoln, Grant, Garfield. Call to mind the fact that of the eight Premiers we have had since confederation, nearly all were developed through the struggles of early life. One was a shoemaker, another a printer, another a stone-mason, another an errand boy. Self-indulgence is the curse of our time. The greatest misfortune that can happen a boy is to have all his wants supplied without an effort on his own part, so that he grows up in a life of luxurious ease. Such a misfortune did

not overtake the Zorra boys. It was not ours to be born with a silver spoon in our mouth ; sometimes it was difficult to get any spoon at all, even the imported horn of a Highland steer ; not ours to be cradled on the luxurious lap of ease ; our cradle at best was no more than a big log hollowed out, and some of us exercised our lungs the first winter after our advent, lying on our back, with only a sheepskin between us and the cold earthen floor. This was our "college of hard knocks," and in it principles of aestheticism were not discussed. No sugar was demanded with the porridge, glad were we when we could get the milk. Whether potatoes should be boiled, fried or baked ; whether pease should be eaten with knife or fork troubled no one ; the only trouble was to get the potatoes or the pease to eat at all. Well, sir, this was not such a bad college after all. True, some were "plucked," and failed to get through ; but a large proportion, probably three-fourths of the men most prominent in public life to-day, graduated in just such colleges. Where there is no battle there is no victory, and where there is no victory there is no strength of character.. The boys of Zorra have risen, not in spite of early difficulties, but because of the perseverance, economy, thrift, self-reliance and integrity developed in them by means of these difficulties.

PIONEER CULTURE.

If our pioneer fathers were men of unaesthetic temperament, and plain manners, they were men sturdy of arm and resolute of heart, as befitted those engaged in a mighty battle with the forest. In the winter season all day long the axes rang incessantly and the trees crashed and fell. There were no club-rooms or bar-rooms in those days, but the woodsman spent his evenings where every husband and father should do, in his own home, and in the bosom of his own family. The time was occasionally improved, in sharpening his axe, or making a handle for it, or mending an old pair of shoes, or putting a patch on his trousers. Sometimes a neighbor would drop in just for a

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ceilidh, and the conversation would turn on the weather, the crops, the taxes, last Sunday's sermon, the next "communion," or the time and place of the next catechizing. The friends in Scotland would be remembered, the records of this and that family traced, and the hope expressed of such a person or family coming to Zorra. Newspapers were scarce, but such as came to hand were eagerly read, and the contents discussed. The library was small, but it always contained a Gaelic Bible, a metrical version of the Psalms in Gaelic, and the Shorter Catechism. Besides these, there could usually be found in it a Gaelic version of "Boston's Fourfold Estate," "Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress," "Edwards on the Affections," "Allaine's Alarm," Baxter's "Call to the Unconverted," Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," and a number of songs or Gaelic poems by such Highland ministers and laymen as Macdonald, Kennedy, Aird, Peter Grant and Dugald Buchanan. All these were read and re-read, over and over again; and I have no hesitation in ascribing much of the vigor of intellect, liveliness of imagination and spiritual discernment which so strikingly characterized many of the fathers, to their thorough mastery of these sacred theological and poetical works. Of very many of the fathers it may truly be said that, in at least three books, they were deeply read: two without—the Bible and God's Providence; the other within—the human heart. The first two filled their minds with lofty and elevating thought; the other gave them that knowledge of themselves which, however important, schools or colleges cannot impart. There is no greater delusion than that intelligence increases in proportion to the number of books read. The reverse is frequently the case. Reading should be a means to develope thinking. Never read a book simply because it is interesting. If your reading decreases your respect for moral purity or your reverence for God, if it gilds vice and ridicules goodness, if it exalts political party above moral principle, or dollars above duty,

if it makes a criminal into a hero, or in any way weakens your sense of responsibility to God and man, it is worse than no reading at all, and you should no more feed your mind upon such reading than you should feed your body upon foul carrion. The Bible is the grandest book in the world to-day. It will develope your intellect, strengthen your will, and purify your life as any or all other books cannot do. It was read and studied by our fathers; and it cheered them in life and supported them in death. This I know, that the fathers in Zorra "who knew and only knew their Bible true" could discourse on the laws of mind and matter, the relationships of society, and the responsibilities of manhood and womanhood, as the wholesale devourers of sensational newspapers, and the "penny-dreadfuls" of our day cannot even conceive of. Be not so anxious to be widely read as be well and deeply read.

PIONEER DANCES.

Let it not be supposed that the life of the pioneer was one of unmingled hardship. This would be a great mistake. There were the clouds but there was also the sunshine. If there was much to be endured there was also much to be enjoyed. Dancing was certainly not prohibited among the fathers, and the "sprees," as they were commonly called, were greatly enjoyed by the young people; although occasionally these festivities gave rise to an exhibition of human infirmities. The story is told of a belle of those days, who was commonly known as "the flower of the forest," being detained from a dance through the trick of a jealous rival. The beautiful maiden was suffering from a slight cold. Her rival called on her the day before that on which the dance was to take place; and feigning much sympathy with her, assured her that a sure and speedy cure for a cold was to keep the feet for a couple of hours in a foot-bath of hot water and mustard. The unsuspecting beauty at once complied. Result: blistered feet, no dance, and alienation of rival beauties. These early dances were usually associated

with a logging or chopping bee and a quilting bee. During the day the men would be in the woods logging or chopping, while the young women of the neighborhood would be in or around the house; some quilting and others attending to the cooking necessary for a large gathering. Of course the table was spread outside the house, and under the shade of the spreading beech or maple. After supper the dishes were washed and laid away, and then the young people hied away to the barn floor, which was nicely swept for the occasion; and there for hours they would trip the light fantastic toe to the tune of a squeaking fiddle or a groaning bag-pipe. At length the grey streaks appeared in the east, and all got ready for the home going. Some of those present had two, three, or even four miles to go, mostly through unbroken woods. It is needless to say there were no buggies or bicycles, but that did not in the least detract from the pleasure of the occasion. Every laddie took his lassie, and conveyed her in safety to her home. On these journeys often were the tender words of love spoken, and vows of constancy uttered. Sometimes too, one of the young people "had a crow to pick" with the other for devoting too much attention to some one else during the evening. But the spirit of manly chivalry actuated the great majority of the young men of the early days, while honest womanhood was the character of the ladies. Here I may repeat the story as I have heard it, of a spruce little Highlander who had arranged with his lady-love to meet her at church the next Sabbath morning. But

"The best laid schemes o' mice an' men,
Gang aft a-gley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief and pain
For promised joy."

There came a great down-pour of rain, and flooded a large part of the road between the church and the home of the young lady. Of course, the lady was not at the kirk that Sunday. However the young Highlander was not to be thwarted in

his purpose by any trifle like a flooded road, so he hired a big, burly fellow to carry him on his shoulders through the deep water; but just as the two, one sitting on the shoulders of the other, reached the middle of the rapidly rolling flood, unfortunately a dispute arose as to how much the little man was to pay the big one for his job. After considerable wrangling, the two disputants were quite unable to agree on the price. Result: down came the little man with a splash into the deep water, while the big one indignantly muttered, "Thar, noo for her, if she pe thinking she'll ride Donald like a horse, and she no pay more'n a saxpence."

I have spoken of the dancing parties, not that I am going to put in a plea for that particular kind of pleasure, although our fathers and mothers seem not to be any the less pure and good because of the "Scotch reel." Times change, and we change with them. The dances of to-day, if reports be true, are very far removed from the "Scotch Reel." I plead not for dancing parties, but I do with emphasis say, let the young and also the old revive the ancestral custom, at least to the extent of occasionally gathering together during the long winter evenings for entertainment and social improvement. Why should not you who have such commodious houses invite occasionally to your homes a number of young men and women who are strangers in our town, and to whom an evening's entertainment in a Christian home, would be a means of grace? The body is not made for constant toil, or the mind for constant study. We are like a harp with a thousand strings. There is a string for work and one for play, one for study and one for rest, one for poetry and one for foot-ball. Harping on one string is sure to produce one-sidedness of character. Young people crave after companionship and enjoyment, and if they are not permitted to find these in Christian homes they will seek them in doubtful or disreputable places. At such gatherings vocal and instrumental music should form part of the

entertainment. There might also be readings, recitations, games of various kinds, and such other things as a sanctified ingenuity will suggest. Guard against late hours. Avoid all amusements that are bad for the health, that blunt the conscience, or that destroy relish for spiritual things. Be lovers of God more than lovers of pleasure, even when the pleasure is innocent and rational. Let our homes furnish such recreation, and club-rooms and bar-rooms will be largely deserted.

DONALD AND DRINK.

The Highlander is always religious, even if he should not always be sanctified. Reverence is an instinct of his nature. If he should be the "waur" of the drink to-day, that is no reason in his estimation why he should not scrupulously attend to his religious duties to-morrow. Indeed, never is he more ready to defend his creed against any "Methody" or "Episcoopal" heresy than when filled, not with the Spirit divine, but with the spirit of wine. He is slow to realize any wrong in drinking "if she pe good whuskey." John McPhee was an industrious, honest man and very devoted to his church. Usually he was kind to his wife and family, and was a good provider. But occasionally he would give way to his enemy, the drink. On these occasions he would for a time completely desert his home, and spend his whole time in and around the village bar-room. It happened that on one of these occasions there was in the hotel a very sick man confined to his room. His pastor, the late Rev. Mr. Mackenzie, made daily visits to the sick room, spending an hour or more there on each occasion. Day after day the good man noticed John loafing around the hotel; so one day he called him aside to give him a word of remonstrance. "John," said the minister, "I am very sorry to see you here and in this condition. Do you not know that you are injuring yourself and neglecting your family? Now go home like a Christian man, and attend to your duties." Thus far John McPhee listened attentively, head uncovered,

and cap in hand. But now it came his turn to speak. "Aye, minister," said he, "I confess I ha'e been taking a drap too much, but I have a sair heart and it's to droon my trouble that I drink. It amaist braks m' heart to see my ain minister, wham I respekit and lovit, every day for a week or more, come to this hoose, and spending his time drinking in a bed-room. I have been trying to droon my sorrow with a drappie now and then, but oh it's hard to bear. To see my beloved pastor coming under the infloocene of the drink. But gin ye'll say naething about it I shall haud my tongue, and we'll baith do better in the future." In after years Mr. Mackenzie told this story with much glee.

Such loyalty to religious convictions even under peculiar difficulties was not rare. The following will illustrate: A certain Highlander gave way to the drink enemy, and was rapidly going the down grade. His minister had frequently warned and entreated him, but in vain. Donald continued going from bad to worse. So one day the minister sharply reprov'd him and told him the disgrace he was bringing upon himself and others. It may be here stated that this minister was very fond of music and did not share the prejudices of some of his parishoners against the use of hymns; indeed he was accustomed to sing Watt's hymns in the manse with his family. This was a sore grief to some of his people, and to none more than to Donald. Well, Donald after being reprov'd for his drinking, returned the compliment in this fashion. "Minister I may be a drunken buddie as ye say; I dinna deny but occasionally I tak a glass too much, but (and now there was a scornful hiss in the tone) I dinna sing Watt's hyemns at ony rate." So saying, Donald walked off with the gait of offended dignity.

Let it not be inferred from these instances that excessive drinking was prevalent among our pioneer fathers. Such an inference would be very unfair. The fathers were, as a class,

industrious, sober, self-respecting. While total abstinence did not, perhaps, prevail to the same extent as to-day, the bar-room treating and the bar-room loafing of to-day, were almost unknown; and intemperance was regarded as dishonoring to God, degrading to character, and destructive to both body and soul.

THE PIONEER AND THE SABBATH.

Much has been said in criticism of the rigid observance of the Sabbath by our fathers. Sometimes, no doubt, this observance led to awkward complications. The story is told of a farmer who had a pond on his farm, and who also owned a ram sheep that was great with his head. On Sabbath afternoon the boys would occasionally have lots of fun with this pugnacious animal. A young fellow would take his place close up to the pond, and then keep bowing his head, as if daring the ram to fight. Instantly the ram, gathering up his strength, would rush forward to battle; but when he came near enough, the boy would nimbly leap to one side, and the ram would plunge into the water, much to the amusement of the juveniles. One Sabbath afternoon the old man caught the boys at this sport. You may be sure he gave them a sound lecturing on the sin of Sabbath desecration, and ordered them all home to study the catechism. The boys soon disappeared; but now the old man began reflecting on the sport, and the more he reflected the more he felt tempted to experiment a little himself. So just for once he would try. Taking his place beside the pond, he made certain movements to attract the attention of the ram. Nothing daunted by former experiences, the brave animal, with head and tail erect, came rushing to the encounter. But the old man, not being so nimble as the boys, failed to get out of the way in time. Result—the wrong party got into the water. Moral: practice what you preach.

The profound regard of some of the pioneers for the Sabbath appears in the following amusing incident. A good elder, one bright Sunday morning donned his best suit of Sunday black. He had gone some distance with his wife on the way to the church, when that lady reminded him that he had forgotten to feed the calf. As it would be night before they could get back, there was but one course open for him. The calf must not be left to starve. So at once the elder retraced his steps, got a pail of milk, and carefully carried it into the field where the calf was enjoying life, after the manner of its kind. The elder's approach filled the calf with joy, and as the milk was slowly and carefully poured into a trough the infant bovine plunged its head, with an emphatic "smash," into the trough. Up spurted the milk in a score of streams, and the elder's black coat was black only in streaks. Then, in this time of trial, appeared ample proof of the elder's respect for the day. Quickly he grasped the calf's head, and as he spoke the following devout words, at each word he thumped that head against that trough. And this is what he said: If—it—warna—the—Sawbath—and—I—no—be—braking—the—Lord's—day—I—would—punch—her—head—through--this--trough." The elder's state of mind was evidently that of the Scotch minister's who, on a certain trying occasion, was greatly exasperated. His "man," who was the only person present, quietly observed to him, "If an aith wad relieve ye, dinna mind my presence."

A MEAN THIEF.

The following incident will illustrate the loyalty of our ancestors to the Sabbath, and the quaint original manner in which some of them could enforce their views of the holy day. A good elder one day came upon a number of young lads who were grossly profaning the Lord's day. In gentle tones, and without the slightest sign of anger, the old man said, "Boys, let me tell you a story. There was a rich man and he owned

seven fine cows. He had a neighbor who was very poor, and possessed nothing at all. But the rich man was so generous that he gave the poor man, free without any price, six of his fine cows. And now what think you the poor man did?" "Well," said one of the boys, "he would be very grateful to the rich man." "I would think," said another, "he ought to show his gratitude by doing what he could to please and honor the man who treated him so kindly." "No, my boys," said the old man, "you will be surprised when I tell you that he was neither grateful nor respectful to his benefactor, but on the contrary, he used to come and steal the milk from the only cow the good man kept for himself." "Is that story true?" said one boy. "Who is that man?" cries another. "Why, that man's too mean to live," shouts a third. "Stop, my dear boys, and I will explain. I have told you a story to teach you a moral. God in his infinite goodness has given us six days in the week for our own use, but the Sabbath he has retained to himself. But, boys, you seem not to be satisfied with six days, for you are robbing God of His day. Is this right? Is this manly?" "You've got us this time," said one of the boys. "He gave us a lump of sugar with a pill inside," said another; but there was no more desecration of the Sabbath for them that day.

THE BENEFITS OF A WELL-SPENT SABBATH.

Let us not be severe on the pioneers for their strict observance of the Sabbath. Who will deny that it developed in them a vigorous Christian manhood and womanhood, and made them strong physically, mentally, morally? France, with her infidelity, and her reckless desecration of the Sabbath, stands to-day face to face with the solemn problem of national extinction. When the Parisian Sabbath has produced better men and women than the Puritan Sabbath has done, it will be time enough to sneer at the fathers. Many of us have heard of the great Breckinridge family of the U. S. There were three brothers of them,

and all stood in the very front rank of able men in the Presbyterian Church of that country. One day Dr. John Breckenridge thus accosted his aged mother: "Mother don't you think you might have been a little less severe on us boys?" "John," replied the good woman, "when you have raised three such sons as I have done, you may undertake to reprove your mother for her methods." The application of this to the Parisian and Puritan Sabbath needs no comment.

Even if men had no immortal souls to be cared for, their brains and their bodies require a Sabbath. If we are to make the most of ourselves even in this life, we must take one day in seven for a quiet rest from physical toil, and mental excitement. It is one of the cunning devices of the devil to destroy men, by tempting them to turn God's appointed day of rest into a day of work or pleasure. Hon. W. E. Gladstone has been one of the hardest workers in England; he is now in his 87th year, enjoying a sound mind in a healthy body, and he ascribes this blessing largely to his devout observance of the Sabbath.

TRUE TO THEIR CONVICTIONS.

It was Charles II., after his restoration in 1660, who said, "Presbyterianism is not a religion for a gentleman," and our fathers are sometimes charged with being narrow and bigotted in their religious views. Some people to-day boast of their own liberality, but their liberality is only another name for ignorance or indifference. They have not conviction enough to be worth contending for. An all-absorbing interest in material things has stifled every high and holy thought. Man's invention and God's teaching are placed side by side in alliance, a compromise is effected, and this is called brotherly love. O for an honest love of the truth, and a readiness to contend for it, even if such contention should be at the cost of our ease and popularity. Three distributors of church

charity in Toronto last winter, fearing that they were imposed upon by all assisting the same persons, determined to compare notes. One of these distributors was a Roman Catholic, another a Methodist, and the third a Presbyterian. They soon found a woman whom they had all been assisting on the ground that she belonged to each of their churches. This woman had her babe baptized, (1) by the Priest, (2) by the Methodist minister, and (3) by the Presbyterian; and she was only waiting till her child got a little bigger, to show that she had no prejudice whatever against the Baptist Church. This woman was no bigot, and she is a fair representative of multitudes who in our day boast of their religious liberality, and whose godliness is only a matter of gain. Liberality to error is treason to the truth. Some people are so "charitable" that they have no controversy with sin or satan. The pioneers of Oxford were Bible-reading, God-fearing, Christ-loving men and women, who believed something, and lived as they believed. To them truth was the Saviour's crown-jewels, and they would as soon think of loving a king and trampling on his crown, as pretend to love Christ, and then trample on his truth.

I have spoken of the humble cabin in the woods, with its rude furniture and meagre fare. But every log in that cabin was put in its place with a grateful heart to God; and however scant the furniture, there never lacked the family altar, around which parents and children assembled morning and evening, for the worship of the Most High; and however meagre the fare, it was never partaken of until the blessing of God was asked upon it. Again at the close of the meal, all eyes were closed and hands folded, while every head bowed in reverent thanks to God for his bounty in providing for the wants of his unworthy creatures. I have mentioned the *ceilidh*, or a friendly visit of one neighbor to the house of another. But even in this apparently trivial event, God was recognized. When any one, old or young, came to a neighbor's house, he

first knocked at the door. At once from within comes the clear, ringing invitation, "come in." The party without opens the door, uncovers his head, and standing still for a moment, invokes a blessing, "*Beannaich so*," (bless this place). Quickly the response comes from the head of the house, "*Gum beannaich e sibh fein*," (may he bless yourself). So also on rising to leave the house, the visitor said, "*Beannachd leibh*," (blessing with you). To which the response came as before, "*Beannachd leibh fein*," (blessing with yourself).

THE CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

But the most important event in the daily religious life of our fathers is yet unmentioned. Come with me on a quiet summer morning or evening to one of these homes. In a small clearing in the dense forest stands the little log cabin. A blue curl of smoke rises from the wooden chimney; it is a symbol of the incense that is being offered up within. We will not disturb the solemnity of the worship, but we will take our place near by. Listen to the sweet strains as they slowly and solemnly ascend on the still air. They are singing the Shepherd's Psalm. Father and mother, far away from the home of early days, unite with those whom God has given them, in the overflow of soul in song, and amid such primitive surroundings their hearts go out in the words:

"The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want.
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green; he leadeth me
The quiet waters by."

After this a chapter is read slowly and solemnly, with occasional observations by the high priest of the family. At the close of the reading, the children are expected to tell something of what they have heard. Then "the books" are closed, the spectacles laid on top of them, and the face of the father clothes itself with grave dignified solemnity, and a strange, unwonted, tremulous depth comes into his voice as he says, "Let us pray." The prayer was certainly not an

"oration," nor was it, from a literary point of view a gem, but it was earnest and emotional, nothing stilted, formal, or frigid in it, and uttered by one who felt the presence of God. We are near enough to hear some of the words, and hearing them we cannot easily forget them.

"O God, our Father, we bow before Thee. We are not worthy of this privilege, but we come in the name of Thy dear Son. Hear us for His sake. Thou art great beyond our understanding, but Thou art infinitely good. Thou didst give us our being, and Thou hast cared for us all our life long, leading us by the still waters and through the green pastures of Thy grace. Thou hast brought us to this good land, and hast given us a house to dwell in. Thou dost spread our table morning, noon, and night; and Thy presence cheers us, so that we need fear no evil. We thank Thee for Jesus Christ, Thy Son, and for redemption through His precious blood. Assure our hearts of an interest in the great atonement. Guilt is ours, grace is Thine. O Father, help us this day. Give us strength and courage and peace. Carry us in Thine arms, and keep us near Thy heart. Hear us, O God of our fathers, for our children. We have given them to Thee in solemn covenant. Write Thy law upon their hearts, so that they may never depart from Thee, but may live holy, happy, useful lives. The Lord hear us for Jesus' sake."

The church was always prayed for, and especially on Saturday night was the divine blessing invoked on the services of the following day. Usually mention was made of "the country in which we dwell" and "the dear land from which we have come." I pity the man who can ridicule such a scene. Richard Baxter tells us of a time when the power of the Gospel was so felt in Kidderminster, that in every house on many a long street, family worship was devoutly observed. The writer can recall a time when in every house on many a long concession line in Zorra, God was worshipped morning and evening. Who can estimate the value of such worship in the formation of character? It promotes order and regularity in a home, and diffuses a sympathy throughout the members. It calls off the mind from the deadening effects of worldly affairs. It says to every member of the family "There

is a God ; there is a spiritual world ; there is a life to come." It fixes the idea of responsibility in the mind of a child. It developes as neither pulpit nor Bible nor S. S. can do, a sense of duty to God and man. Blessed is the home that is thus devoutly consecrated to God. Whatever uncertainties hang to human view, over its future history ; whether predominates there the voice of health and gladness, or the wail of sorrow and pain ; whether its larder be filled with plenty, or made lean by poverty ; how oft soever its windows may be darkened by calamity and death,—one thing is sure, it is the abiding place of the Most High ; the angel of the covenant is there, and in the deepest night of grief that home has light and hope and peace. What has given Scotland the proud position she occupies to-day among the nations of the earth ? Is it her insular position, the wisdom of her rulers, the valour of her soldiers, or the genius of her poets ? No, not at all. Her greatness and her power are to be explained in the honor in which God has been held in her families. It is Christianity among her people that is the grand secret of all her prosperity and her greatness. And this Christianity is fed and nourished chiefly at the family altar, in such scenes as Robert Burns photographs in his "Cottar's Saturday Night."

"From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad.
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
An honest man's the noblest work of God."

Yes, friends, here is the secret of Scotland's greatness. It lies not in her ironclads, and her Armstrong guns, but it rests on something far mightier than armies and navies—the Christianity of her people, a Christianity that begins and is carried on at the family altar. This is the righteousness that has exalted that nation, and this righteousness, far more than the richest products of our mines, fields and forests, will make this Dominion truly great and happy. Talk of colleges ! The best college in which the professional men of Zorra ever

graduated, that which has left the most lasting and beneficial influence upon their minds and hearts, was the college of a Christian home. These men, to-day, are scattered far and wide, and they belong—some to the medical, some to the legal, and some to the theological profession, but they look back with fond recollection to the days, when with father and mother, brothers and sisters, they reverently knelt in prayer on the rude floor of the little log cabin. How tender the memory of that last home-leaving, when the boy was going far away to enter college, or engage in business, or to learn a trade. For weeks past, kind hands have been preparing such little articles of clothing as might be useful to him when away from mother and sisters: and now the little trunk is packed and the morning of separation has come. There are but few words spoken, and feeling is wonderfully suppressed, but

“Kneeling down to heaven’s eternal King,
The saint, the father and the husband prays:
Hope springs exulting on triumphant wings,
That thus they all shall meet in future days.”

Many years have since passed by, bringing with them many and varied experiences, but the influence of that solemn hour is with us still, and will abide with us while memory lasts.

Ours is a day of competition, hurry, excitement, when business is war and anything is fair. Home life is largely broken up, and the conditions are not favorable to the cultivation of kindness, quietness, and a tender regard for the happiness of others. Some men are nowhere greater strangers than in their own homes, and they know but little of the beautiful domestic life of our fathers. Looking at our ancestors in this country, there seems to me to be at least one lesson that stands out bright and clear, viz: that it matters little how trivial or commonplace our work may be in itself, the spirit in which we do the work is everything. As Carlyle says, speaking of his peasant father, “Be his work that of palace-building

and Kingdom founding, or only delving and ditching, to me it is no matter. All human work is transitory, small in itself, contemptible. Only the result of the work, and the spirit that dwelt in the worker is significant." Our fathers are gone, but the work which they began is still going on in its results; and it will go on with ever-increasing influence for good, outlasting the pyramids, surviving the very mountains and the solid earth, and enduring to all eternity in heaven above, an imperishing monument of the grace of God in them.

Max O'rell has written two well known books. The one is called "John Bull and his Island." The other is entitled "Brother Jonathan and His Continent." If I had the leisure and the ability necessary, I would write a book and call it "Donald and His District." The first sentence in "Brother Jonathan and His Continent" is "The United States contains 65,000,000 of people, most of them Colonels." The first sentence in my book would be: "There was a time when Zorra had only a few hundred men and women, but every man was a hero and every woman a heroine." We speak not of their wealth. The gold and the silver was not theirs; but they had what was infinitely better—the fear of God, the love of liberty, sound bodies, healthy minds, and a generous sympathy with one another. There were many of them rich in the Bible, and some of them were millionaires in grace.

In conclusion let me say that it is a great privilege to have had godly ancestors.

"Lives of good men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime."

And this is especially true when the good are united to us by nature and by grace, and we have their example and their prayers to encourage us. Where they found grace to guide, to comfort, to sustain, we can find it too. The Lord delights to bless even to a thousand generations. I like to feel that I serve "the God of my fathers," and to hope that my

children and their children's children will serve Him also. I love to sing those sweet Psalms because they are God's blessed truth; but I love them none the less because my fathers in this and other lands for generations back, have sung them—often in poverty and persecution, “when days were dark and friends were few.” I love this Holy Book because it comforts me in sorrow, directs me in difficulty, and gives me a hope beyond the grave, but I love it none the less because it has done all this for the fathers and their fathers. Shall we prove ourselves the worthy sons of noble sires? They died in the hope that we would fill their places; shall not their hope be realized in fact? Will any be found trampling under foot a father's remonstrance and a mother's prayers?

WHAT SHALL THE HARVEST BE?

We must not live in the past. Yesterday's bread will not sustain us to-day. Last winter's fire will not warm our homes next winter. Last summer's sunshine will not paint the flowers of this summer. We cannot live on memories.

“Act, act in the living present
Hearts within and God o'er head.”

The nobility of our fathers will not necessarily make us noble. Let us so live that our descendants may be as proud of us as we are to-day of our ancestors. Ascent is better than descent. Better the foundation of a new pyramid than the tapering apex of an old one. What will the future be? No one can think of the extent of this Dominion; the variety of its climate, the richness of its soil, the vast resources of its lakes and rivers, fields and forests, and still doubt that there is a great future before this Canada of ours, if Canadians are true to the privileges bequeathed them. We are only awakening to realize the bright day. With fast steamship lines on the Atlantic and the Pacific, and a great railway running from ocean to ocean, who can doubt but this Dominion will yet be

the great highway between the vast wealth of the West and the teeming millions of the East. As a new country, we have great opportunities and great dangers. We are laying the foundation of what will yet be a magnificent edifice. Shall we not do our work well? To change the figure: We stand almost at the fountain-head, and can direct the stream. That stream shall one day become a mighty river. Shall it be foul or clear? To drop all figure: Canada will develope, and the question that should concern us most is shall she develope along moral lines? Will the home, the Church, the School, the Sabbath, continue to have the same warm place in the affections of the generations yet to come that they had in the hearts of our pioneer fathers? If so we fear not the future. Happy is the people whose God is the Lord.



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